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IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-4 (cancelled)

5. (currently amended): A method of secreting a heterologous polypeptide of interest in a cell comprising using a translational initiation region variant operably linked to nucleic acid encoding said heterologous polypeptide to express said heterologous polypeptide, wherein [translational initiation region includes a prokaryotic secretion signal sequence and] the translational strength of said variant translational initiation region is less than the translational strength of the wild-type translational initiation region.

6. (previously added): The method of claim 5 wherein the amount of secreted polypeptide when said nucleic acid is operably linked to said variant is greater than the amount of secreted polypeptide when said nucleic acid is operably linked to the wild-type translational initiation region.

7. (cancelled)

8. (currently amended): The method of claim 25 [5] wherein said secretion signal sequence is selected from the group consisting of STII, OmpA, PhoE, LamB, MBP and PhoA.

9. (previously added): The method of claim 8 wherein said signal sequence is selected from the group consisting of STII, PhoE and LamB.

10. (previously added): The method of claim 9 wherein said signal sequence is STII.

11. (previously added): The method of claim 9 wherein said signal sequence is LamB.

12. (previously added): The method of claim 9 wherein said signal sequence is PhoE.

13. (previously added): A nucleic acid encoding a translational initiation region variant, wherein the translational strength of said variant translational initiation region is less than the translational strength of the wild-type translational initiation region, wherein said translational initiation region includes a prokaryotic secretion signal sequence selected from the group consisting of STII, OmpA, PheE, LamB, MBP and PhoA.

14. (currently amended): A nucleic acid encoding a polypeptide operably linked to a translational initiation region variant, wherein the [translational initiation region includes a prokaryotic secretion signal sequence and the] translational strength of said variant

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translational initiation region is less than the translational strength of the wild-type translational initiation region.

15. (cancelled)

16. (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 26 [14] wherein said translational initiation region includes a signal sequence selected from the group consisting of STII, OmpA, PhoE, LamB, MBP and PhoA.

17. (previously added): The nucleic acid of claim 16 wherein said signal sequence is selected from the group consisting of STII, PhoE and LamB.

18. (previously added): The nucleic acid of claim 17 wherein said signal sequence is STII.

19. (previously added): The nucleic acid of claim 17 wherein said signal sequence is LamB.

20. (previously added): The nucleic acid of claim 17 wherein said signal sequence is PhoE.

21. (previously added): An expression vector comprising the nucleic acid of claim 14 operably linked to additional elements for expression of a gene of interest.

22. (previously added): A host cell comprising the expression vector of claim 21.

23. (previously added): A host cell comprising the nucleic acid of claim 14.

24. (previously added): A method of secreting a heterologous polypeptide of interest in a cell comprising using a translational initiation region variant operably linked to nucleic acid encoding said heterologous polypeptide to express said heterologous polypeptide, wherein the translational strength of said variant translational initiation region is less than the translational strength of the wild-type translational initiation region, wherein said translational initiation region includes a prokaryotic secretion signal sequence selected from the group consisting of STII, OmpA, PhoE, LamB, MBP and PhoA.

25. (reinstated - formerly claim #7): The method of claim 5 wherein said translational initiation region includes a prokaryotic secretion signal sequence.

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26. (reinstated - formerly claim #15): The nucleic acid of claim 14 wherein said translational initiation region includes a prokaryotic secretion signal sequence.

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